

*...criando en suas entranhas estas lombrigas  
ou digo BIBORAS que o estão roendo  
de contunuo por todas as partes de seu todo*<sup>1</sup>.  
Miguel Leitão d'Andrada (1622)

*No hay lei que nos obligue a criar lobeznos  
para un daño futuro cierto del ganado.*  
Sancho de Moncada (1619)

*On donne bien une récompense de 10 livres pour une tête de loup.  
Un vagabond est infiniment plus dangereux pour la société.*  
Le Trosne (1764)

A historical bird's eye view of Gypsophobia<sup>2</sup> and prejudices against the Roms

Not all sufferings justify the label of discrimination. Not all traditions convey only human positive values. Not all attractive innovations should be viewed *a priori* as immune from ethnic prejudices and racist consequences. Biased attitudes against the Roms evolved with time and tend now to be consonant with legal requirements, in other words their harmfulness acts through lawful mechanisms. Even anti-racist campaigns may convey racial prejudices, foster racist attitudes or bring discriminatory results. It is crucial to be aware of such paradoxes to fight efficiently Gypsophobia in all possible domains. This is the reason why a historical survey is very much needed in order to avoid the traps of confusion and misunderstanding.

This contribution does not aim at reviewing all the history of prejudice against the Roms but only to highlight some major

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<sup>1</sup> ...breeding in its womb these worms, or rather vipers, which are endless eating into all the part of its body.

<sup>2</sup> The term "Gypsophobia" will be used throughout this article, meaning "fear of the racist image of the Roms, viewed as Gypsies", rather than an alleged "Rromophobia", which would mean "fear of really existing Roms".

events and discuss them from the point of view of racism and antigypsyism.

If we accept the hypothesis that there were [proto]-Rroms among the "Saracens", mainly represented by the Fatimide Egyptians holding the Holy Land at the arrival in Jerusalem of the first Crusade (1096-1099 – hence the confusion between Rroms and Egyptians), it is clear that the thorough massacre of both proto-Rroms and genuine Egyptians by the Crusaders was not motivated by any anti-Rromani feeling but was merely a part of the anti-Muslim war (more precisely anti-Seljuk war, since the Crusade was basically aimed against the Seljuks, previous masters of the Holy Land between 1076 and 1098, and not against the Fatimides who had conquered it back in 1098).

A survey of the following centuries suggests distinguishing four main periods in the history of European attitudes toward the Rroms, with an additional fifth side-segment devoted to slavery in the Principalities of Moldova and Muntenia.

#### 1. The first contacts

After the "missed encounter" between Rroms and Europeans during the first Crusade, a first minor wave of Rroms penetrated Europe through Venetian enclaves (Cyprus, Nauplio, Methone, Crete, Ionian Isles, and Raguse/Dubrovnik) in the context of the diplomatic and commercial links between Venice and the Seljuk sultanate of Konya/Ikonion where the bulk of the Rromani population was settled, converted as it had been by force to Islam since their very deportation from India. The Rroms mentioned by the some monks in Crete in 1322 and 1323 belong probably to this group. They were carrying the name of Saracens or Egyptians, due to the century-old confusion mentioned above, and would give the name of "Little Egypt" to the places where they would settle. Shifting to the Venetian lands was for them the only way of giving up their forced islamisation without being sentenced to death by the Muslim authorities.

The arrival of the Osmanli, representing the second Turkish migration from the east (Turkistan) to Asia Minor, where they set up an empire as early as 1301, could be related to the second Rromani wave of expansion toward Europe, this time through the Balkans. Those Rroms, with a different history of their own,

would introduce themselves as originating from India (as in Forli in 1422), an assertion conflicting with the already popular idea that they were Egyptians.

Be it as it may, this expansion into Europe did not face hostile attitudes, but rather surprise, curiosity and even sometimes warm welcome and respect. As de Vaux de Folletier writes: "Western aristocracy seemed to regard the Rroms' leaders coming from the East as members of a caste similar to theirs and forced into exile". Many reports of benevolent attitudes are evidenced in history, beginning with a letter of recommendation by Sigmund II, king of Bohemia and Hungary, in 1417 and Pope Martin V a few years later or Anfon V of Aragón in 1425. Most Rroms are welcome wherever they travel and count Miguel Lucas of Iranzo organizes a gorgeous reception for them in Jaen (Andalusia) in 1462. All Rroms would move quite freely all over Europe, from pilgrimage to pilgrimage (since such movement represented the then basic framework of legitimate travels). Alberto Pio, Prince of Carpi asks his friends to grant hospitality and freedom of movements to count John of Little Egypt and his band. One could call this period the golden age of the Rromani people's European history. True enough, some local authorities attempt to move them away, but in a similar way as they would have done with any other outsiders, not by force nor systematically: the first concrete example is probably when the Rroms, who had been camping for three weeks in front of the Saint Denis basilica (France), were driven to Pontoise on 8 Sept. 1427. In 1449, another group is driven out of Frankfurt on the Main (a similar decision had allegedly been taken already in 1417). In spite of such isolated acts of aversion, all Western Europe encompassed the free movements of Rromani groups, in search of a proper kingdom to settle. Indeed, at that time, the only restrictions were issued by church authorities against Rromnia's fortune telling (which represented competition to their spiritual power).

## 2. The time of unreserved anti-Gypsyism

A new epoch in Rromani history was announced in 1471 when Swiss authorities in Lucerne decree that there should not be a single Rrom left in the Helvetian Confederation. Beginning in 1500, Europe witnessed a series of expulsions rapidly moving from place to place all over Western Europe: Augsburg Diet on that very year, Belgium episcopate in 1540, Warsaw Sejm in

1557 ("the Gypsies, or useless people, will be by us from our country driven out..."), Ferdinand I Habsburg, Holy Roman Emperor shortly before his death in 1564 (he also issued orders of extermination), Pope Pius V in 1568, banishing all Rroms from the realm of the Holy Roman Church, Augustus, Elector of Saxony, in 1579, confiscating Rroms' travel permits and banishing them from the state... and so on until the end of 18 century (only in Germany 48 such banishment laws were passed until 1774). France published its first law of banishment in 1504 (Louis XII), and it was renewed in 1510 (with hanging in case of disobedience), 1539 (François I), 1561 (Charles IX) and 1660 (Louis XIV). Charles V of Northern Netherlands forbade Rroms' entrance to his realm in 1524, repeating this edict in 1537, 1538, 1544, 1548, 1553 and 1560 – in some cases under penalty of "loss of life and property" (1537). As we will see later these movements still continue under a slightly different juridical form. In 1525 the Portuguese Côrtes ordered that "no Cigans should enter the realm and that those staying in it should leave it", a disposal repeated in 1538 (Lei III). Italian free cities followed a like policy, as exemplified among others by duke of Urbino's decree dated 1550, renewed in 1553 and confirmed in 1580, expelling all Rroms from all his territories (Urbino, Pesaro, Senigallia). An echo of such practices is to be found as well in the For of Bearn of Henry II d'Albret (1551) and later that of Navarra/Nafarroa (1608) which stipulated that "Bohemians also known as Egyptians and vagrants" have to be whipped and banished<sup>3</sup>. Between 1538 and 1713 the Navarrian Parliament enacted nineteen rulings banishing the Rroms from the kingdom on pain of being whipped<sup>4</sup> – with a pitch in 1652 sentencing the males to the galleys and the females to shaving and life imprisonment. The multiplication of decrees and rulings shows but their inefficiency.

As early as the second half of the 16 century, the will to remove the Rroms as far as possible led to their deportation to Brazil and Angola by Portuguese authorities (there were many Rroms among the *degradados*, i.e. undesirable exiled by *degrede* "decree"), and to other American countries by Spain and France

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<sup>3</sup> "lous condemnar senhs aucun deport a la pena deu fouet, los banir et exhilar deu present pais"

<sup>4</sup> "bannits et exhilats a perpetuitat deu present pais e souverebetat de Bearn touts Bohemis".

(deportation of Bohemians from Poitou to Martinique in 1724 and to Louisiana in 1734). Interestingly enough, Navarra suggested in 1715 to "sell the Rromnias to the islands to cover the expenses of their transport, as [practiced with] Guinea slaves", as an alternative to their enslavement in manufactures. One can also find mentions of Rroms exiled from Portugal *por sua vontade* (on their own will), which means rather that they preferred a risky exile to Brazil than facing endless restrictions in Portugal: ban of exerting a profession, ban of renting a house etc...

As a parallel to this will to get rid of the Rroms, one can observe an increasing rule of mob violence, acting in total impunity: since 1501, cases are recorded of Germans, who killed Gypsies, being protected by laws stating that "taking the life of a Gypsy is not an act against the policy of the state". A general order is issued at Augsburg stating that Gypsy men may be shot on sight and their women raped if found anywhere in Germany. In 1514, Switzerland encourages "Gypsy hunts" among its citizens as a means of urging Gypsies to leave the country, a provision renewed in 1580 and encountered at this time also in the Netherlands and Germany<sup>5</sup>. In 1659, a mass murder of Rroms in Neudorf, near Dresden, is recorded without any mention of punishment against the murderers. Only two years later, in 1661, elector Johann Georg II of Saxony imposes the death penalty on all Gypsies found in his territory and instigates "Gypsy hunts" as means of exterminating Gypsy population. A ruling issued in Châtelet (Paris) enjoins to sound the alarm when Bohemians or their wives or children are encountered and to attack and chase them, shooting them with fire arms in case of resistance. In 1726, a record by Johann Weissenbruch describes wholesale murder on November 14 or 15 of a community of Gypsies in Germany: five are organized nationwide in order to expel them from the land. Two events are of a peculiar atrocity in Austria and Hungary: in 1710, several Rromani families are drowned by peasants in marshes for being suspected of cannibalism of lost travelers (found safe a few weeks later) and in 1782, as reported by Hancock, two hundred Rroms are arrested and tortured until they confess to charges of cannibalism, charges which resulted false upon checking. In the Netherlands, *Heidenjachten* ("pagan

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<sup>5</sup> "Württemberg Geschossen ein starker Hirsch, 5 Schmaltiere, 3 grobe Sauen, 10 geringe Sauen, 2 Zigeuner, eine Zigeunerin, ein Zigeunerkind"

hunts") were organized jointly with infantry, cavalry and police. Such pogroms would continue up to 1835 when on 11 November 1835 such a hunt brings 260 killed Rroms, Rromnia and éhave. In addition there were in many countries hunting bonuses for any person bringing the proof that he had killed Rroms – what gave birth to quite sordid vocations. One should not forget that this sport was quite popular against black population in South Africa, Namibia as well as in other places, like Tasmania and Chatham islands, where the indigenous population was totally exterminated during such hunts, often perpetrated as an entertainment after Sunday services.

As a matter of fact, authorities did not content themselves with spontaneous mob violence. Instead they took over the duty of eliminating Rroms, first by sending males to the galleys, and later through orders of extermination. As well in France as in Spain, numerous Rroms were sent to the galleys from the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century on. More explicitly, if an order of banishment was not obeyed, the accused was sent to the galleys – French ruling of 1561, confirmed by Louis XVI ("Déclaration contre les Bohèmes") in 1682 and shortly later by his minister Colbert, renewed 1647, 1660, 1666, 1682, 1724 et 1764. As a result, the convict's files of 1739 record that in 1739, among 94 Bohemians, only 3 were detainees sentenced for stealth while all 91 others for being born Bohemians. In England, Edward VI decreed in 1547 that wandering Rroms have a V branded on their chests and be made slaves for two years. Anyone escaping was to be branded with an S and enslaved for life. In 1609, the Scottish parliament passed an Act expelling all Rroms from the kingdom and declaring that remaining Rrom who would be caught should be hanged or forced into servitude for life. In 1596, 106 men, women and children, faced execution in northern England on the basis of being Rroms. In Germany, a law of Ober-Rhein issued in 1709 stated that Gypsies apprehended for any reason, whether criminal or not, were to be sent to the galleys or deported. One can identify here the roots of similar approaches to be implemented by the nazis. Year after year, the hatred against Rroms leads to a legislation of systematical ethnic-based policy of genocide: in 1714, an order is issued in Mainz sending all male Gypsies apprehended to be hung at the gallows and requiring the branding and whipping of women and children. Frederick Augustus, Elector of Saxony, orders a few years later the murder of any Gypsy

resisting arrest. Emperor Charles VI of Germany orders the extermination of Gypsies in 1721 and specifies in 1726 that any male Gypsy found in the country is to be killed instantly, while Gypsy women and children are to have their ears cut off and be shipped to the nearest foreign border. During this period, Frederick William makes it a hanging offense in Prussia merely to be born a Gypsy for all those over the age of eighteen. All Gypsies entering Bohemia are to be hanged by decree of 1740. As a result, the persecution of the Roms during this period reached such an unprecedented height in the early 1600's/1700's that it is still known in Rromani history as the "first great [attempt of] genocide" of the this people in western Europe.

The situation is slightly different – but hardly better in Spain, since the laws leaves an opening to "rehabilitation": instead of banishing or killing the Roms for the mere "crime" of being born Roms (as later again in nazi times), the Spanish provisions would respect the physical existence of the Roms, provided the latter give up their language, custom, clothing, dancing, working at fair grounds or with horses and mules, way of traveling etc... The first edict on this subject is the famous *pragmática* of Medina del Campo (1499), confirmed eventually more than 20 times (including galley and death penalties in cases of disobedience), until the very interesting *Gran Pragmática* by Charles III, which declared the Roms equal in rights to all other subjects of the crown, provided that they give up definitely all the identity features already forbidden by previous texts – on pain of being branded with red iron and eventually killed in the event of second offence. In this context, anti-Gypsyism in Spain was marked by a significant event: upon an initiative of bishop Gaspar Vázquez Tablada, governor of the Spanish highest political Council, the Consejo de Castilla, king Ferdinand VI – known for his depressive and scrupulous character, launched on 30 July 1749 the so-called Gran Redada de Gitanos (great round-up) with imprisonment of all the Roms living in all 54 main cities of Spain. This action was the culmination of an increasing severity in implementing "all royal decrees against Gitanos", as ordered by bishop Tablada during the three preceding years. The round-up had been carefully prepared, since Tablada had obtained from the Pope the right to deprive the Roms of any ecclesiastical immunity, in case they

would be tempted to seek refuge in churches. The king's confessor, Francisco Rávago s. j. was also active in convincing his sovereign to carry out this secret plot, justifying – as he wrote, the legitimacy of "extirpating this evil race, hateful to God and pernicious to me... the king will do great honor to God our Lord if he manages to extinguish this people". Due to the lack of any plan as to their further fate, the captured Gitanos, families separated among various jails, prisons and arsenals, were left detained several years – in some cases 15 or 16, without any rule but local unplanned decisions. This episode, far from the usual spirit of "rehabilitation" prevailing in Spain – in fact a culturocide, is closer to the genocide type, characterizing rather German countries and France.

The idea of dismembering families was emerging in those times. Some attempts in Navarra/Nafarroa (ruling of 1652) have already been mentioned, but the 18<sup>th</sup> century cultivates this practice, first of all in Germany: in 1710, Frederick I of Prussia condemns all male Rroms to forced labor, women to be whipped and branded, and their children permanently placed with peasant families. In 1714, an order is issued in Mainz sending all male Rroms apprehended to the gallows, and requiring the branding and whipping of women and children. In 1722, in Frankfurt-am-Main Rromani parents are branded and deported while their children are taken from them and placed permanently with non-Rromani families. However, the most renowned attempts of family destruction and child abduction were perpetrated under the reign of Maria Theresa 1 of Austria, queen of Bohemia and Hungary and her son Joseph II, the German emperor: they issued a series of vigorous orders aiming at turning the Rroms into New Hungarians/peasants by force, in a way quite parallel to the Spanish *pragmáticas*: as in Spain the Rromani language was very much targeted. In 1773 it was decided to abduct children 5 years and older in order to place them in Hungarian peasant families (paid 18 ft per capita) – the first implementation, dated 21 Dec. 1773 near Bratislava (Preßburg, Pozsony), was apparently followed by only a second one, dated 24 April 1774 in Fahlendorf and Studené (Gnadendorf, Hideghét), but a few month later most children managed to return to their native homes. However the idea of dismembering families inspired French authorities who in 1802 acted in a similar way with Rroms from northern Euskadia:



women, children and elder were sent to arrest cells for beggars, men sent to forced labor and young éhave enlisted by force to the army and navy. According to Hancock, the same methods inspired in 1830 the authorities in Nordhausen in their attempt to bring about the eventual extinction of the Rromani population by forcibly and permanently removing children from their families for placement with non-Gypsies. This reminds of similar criminal practices exerted by the Roman Catholic Church in the United States and Canada against Native Americans' children, who were forcibly taken, placed into harsh Jesuit schooling, into hostile white homes, into Spartan convents and into church-run orphanages differing from prisons by the name.

Most of these measures were accompanied by interdictions to the majority population of any intercourse (trade, sheltering, help of any kind, marriage etc.) with the Rroms on serious pain but the reiteration of such decrees show they were inefficient. In Spain after the great round-up there were even villagers demonstrating to the police, because their village economy needed the labor of the Rroms who had been jailed.

One can wonder why the attitude of the European changed so much at the turn of the century. A sole answer would lead to simplification, inexactitude and error. Central powers, churches, gentlemen, urban subjects and peasants did not response uniformly during all this period and in all countries. Some guidelines have been suggested but they are far of presenting a comprehensive explanation of the phenomena:

- the psychological knowledge of Rromani fortune tellers fell in competition with the spiritual power of the church, and as a result soothsayers were treated as sorcerers; the existence of an alternative social structure was also perceived as a danger by churches and their hostility to the Rroms remains constant in history;
- the emergence of a centralized royal power demanded more and more submission of local gentry to the king, which was contrary to the frequent local battles (be they among nobles or against the king), in which Rroms mercenaries were hired; destroying such forces could speed up the subordination of petty nobles to the monarch;

- there was an increasing number of very dangerous armed highway bandit and in many cases there was a general confusion between them and the Rromani bands – to the best of the bandits' profit, who could accuse the Rroms for their violence and robbery (as it was reported word for word by the Préfet of Pyrénées Atlantiques in 1802);

- ideologies promoting work as a value in itself (it was treated earlier rather as a punishment) turned the poor pilgrim and beggar from the figure of a holy poor to that of an idler and lazy parasite, while the evolution of local economy – including a terrible agricultural crisis, was reducing more and more the labor opportunities for the Rroms. In addition, more and more people were forced off the land which they had either occupied or worked on. In 1600's the agricultural wages were significantly lower than what they had been a century before. This created a new mass of dispossessed, who traveled the countryside, along with the Rroms, looking for employment opportunities or any expedient for survival. Yet, the Rroms, especially those with a darker skin, represented a "visible minority" and hence became a convenient scapegoat for social distress and economic hardships.

- the emergence of a new pattern of standard subject (later citizen): peasant, settled, Roman catholic, white etc... was more and more putting the Rroms outside the society: they had made a pact with the devil, as the alleged color of their skin and the sound of their language could attest, they were spies of the Turks, Saracens and other Muslims etc... In the plebs' view, the Rroms' reluctance to clerical humiliation could but express their links with the devil. True enough there were (as there are) most various shades of skin among the Rroms but hoi polloi focused their attention upon swarthy persons, what was taken over by painters, who presented more and more "typical" Gypsies – with "typical" meaning "black" (most photographers continue their selection of "typical" Rroms in the same manner, strengthening the stereotype created centuries ago; as a matter of fact, the autochthonous Balkan population was far darker than most Rroms and the darkness of skin of some Rromani groups originate not from India but from intermarriages with Balkan autochthonous. As for being spies of the Saracens, this was a mere reminiscence of the time when the Crusaders discovered the first Rroms with the Seljuks in the Holy Land, the specific position of some Rroms in the context of the

Veneto-Seljuk relationship and the arrival of the main Rromani wave to the Balkans at the beginning of Ottoman times.

Interesting enough, these forms of anti-Gypsyism mentioned above were then limited to Western countries, while there is no evidence of such a strong hatred in the Ottoman Empire: Rromani songs from Bulgaria witnessed atrocities perpetrated against Rroms by the Turks, but they were not specifically anti-Gypsy, since all other non Muslim communities would suffer the same under the Ottomans. This is also true for most parts of Eastern Europe and Russia. The comparative late arrival and the scarcity of the Rromani contingent there could be an explanation for these areas, while in the Balkans they had found their socio-economic and vocational niches very soon. However there were some developments which led later to a like rejection even there, among others the diffusion of the western stereotype of the Rroms through German and French literature in Russia and the influence of the Roman Catholic Church.

### 3. Slavery in Muntenia and Moldova

The only Eastern exception to a comparatively fair treatment of the Rroms is their five centuries of slavery in the two principalities of Moldova and Muntenia. It is not the point here to describe the various classes of slaves, the barbarous treatment they were submitted to, the economic advantages the principalities withdrew of this qualified and peaceful unpaid labor force or the stages toward the definitive abolition of slavery in 1855 (Moldova) and 1856 (Muntenia), since some publications are now available – after 150 years of silence. It could be useful to point out momentous features of this slavery in the heart of Europe. First of all, it is crucial to underline that in spite of some authors' skepticism we are confronted here with genuine slavery and it is needed to dispel any ambiguity. True enough, there were also serfs in these principalities, living in ruthless conditions of poverty and submission but serfdom (called *rumânia* in Muntenia and *vecinia* in Moldova) differed from slavery (called usually *robia*) in various respects:

- the Rromani slaves were objects of other peoples' property, they could be bought, sold, donated, exchanged, pawned, bequeathed, confiscated or risked at various games, just like any other piece of cattle;

- the slaves did not enjoy any juridical responsibility or personality, they were outside the mainstream legal system and came within the penal competence of their masters (in addition to the customary Rromani law for offences between Rroms);
- their belongings and family members were at any time at the entire disposal of their masters – which deprived the Rroms of the concepts of confidence in the future and project and still bear consequences today;
- the codex specified quite distinct treatments of slaves and serves;
- serfdom was abolished in 1746 in Muntenia and 1749 in Moldova, while slavery was abolished one century later.

There could be isolated exceptions to this rule, as always in history, but they cannot question the general pattern given above.

One should also recall that the Rroms' reduction to slavery was probably a step by step process: the Rromani families entering Muntenia and Moldova would be seized by local squires, without any legal basis, and the system was developed later on into a codified system. We can observe therefore a sharp difference between the Moldo-Muntenian situation, where human newcomers were immediately converted into chattel or even cattle – with all the obvious consequences of this quality, and the West, where the rejection of the Rroms started more than one century after their arrival and increased to the point of justifying all possible ways to get rid of these "alien, dangerous, useless and rapacious people". In the first case, economic necessities brought racist behavior of the lords and rooted racial prejudices in the everyday practice, while in the second case, the installation of racism lead to economic exclusion.

The abolition of slavery could be welcomed as a major date in Rumania's history but one should not forget that no measures were taken to grant the emancipated a living, employment or care. The story of Rromani slavery remained taboo – as it is still in most at present in most circles and nothing has ever been attempted to combat (or at least identify and recognize) the evils created by this half millennium of animalization in both Rroms' and non-Rroms minds. Only former slave owners were compensated by the State but the Rroms themselves did not beneficiate any aid to overcome the slavery and post-slavery trauma.

#### 4. Scientific and legal anti-Gypsyism

The 19<sup>th</sup> century could be viewed as a time of break in the history of anti-Gypsyism: not only Moldova and Muntenia wanted to get rid of slavery, a shameful remainder of the past, viewed by progressive Rumanian forces as an obstacle to European integration, but more widely new ideas arising from the Enlightenment. As a matter of fact, the most famous philosophers were rather reluctant and even sometimes ludicrous on the seldom occasions when they tackled the "Bohemians" and "Egyptians". Yet, most probably the general atmosphere they had brought in human relations, together with the slight decline of people's confidence to magic and churches, lessened to some extent anti-Gypsy practices – although all populations on the move were strictly kept on a watchful eye. However during the same period, France gave birth to a wide movement of allegedly "scientific" racism, founded by Joseph A. Gobineau in his "Essay on the Inequality of Human Races" (1853-1855). The prevailing illusion of this time was that everything could be ruled by some formal simplistic postulates issued by those persons deemed as guardians of the truth and rights. And their truth and rights were not favorable to the Roms and their culture. In the meantime, literature had elaborated a series of stereotypes of the "Gypsy", in accordance with the expectations of the plebs and most writers adhered to these stereotypes. Only a handful of them, as Pushkin in Russia or Budai-Deleanu in Rumania, at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, had a perceptive insight into Rromani life. Even "scientific literature" was not exempt of reprehensible judgments, as exemplified by Grellmann (the one who usurped the discovery of the Rroms' Indian origin), saying he was studying the Gypsy language in spite of his "clear repugnancy, like a biologist dissecting some nauseating, crawling thing in the interests of science."...

So, as a result of the crystallization of the "Gypsy" into the dreadful and/or seductive stereotypes, as well as the emerging racist science, the political will of putting everything into legal frameworks and the manipulation of those stressing the need of "security", some countries began a new wave of acute anti-Gypsyism. Whereas in Germany, there had been between 1800 and 1875 only two laws which could be interpreted as against the Rroms (A royal ordinance in 1819 referred to *beggars and itinerants*, and a police directive issued in 1863 referred to

*persons of unknown origin without visible means of livelihood* – none of them mentioning *Zigeuners* by name), no less than eight bulletins were issued by the authorities between 1878 and 1889 and until 1900 they increased to one per year. The first specific reference to the Roms by name is found in a law issued in 1886; prior to this date, the term used were "beggar", "itinerant" and so on. The closing year of the 19<sup>th</sup> century also marked the creation of the *Zigeuner-Zentrale* in Munich, fueled by Gypsophobia. Thanks to the establishment of the rule of law, the nature of persecutions against Roms changed from local, random acts of oppression by the peasants or the police to institutionalized policies of "justice". Nor was this unique to Germany, since a similar situation existed in France, where in 1885 a General Census of the Rromani population was carried out on March 20<sup>th</sup> at the order of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, in 1889 a law came into effect for the expulsion of Roms from the districts (*Départements*), and in 1897 Louis Barthou recommended the issuance of special identification cards for "Gypsies and Nomads", the *carnet anthropométrique*, which paved the way for the introduction of repressively strict measures controlling Roms during the administration of Georges Berry following 1903. Ferdinand David began in 1907 his campaign against the "nomads living in caravans" which led to the creation of Barthou's recommended *carnet anthropométrique*, one of the most sophisticated and suffocating means of repression. Since the French Constitution did not allow the identification of any human group on ethnic grounds, the Parliament created the new notion of "nomads" in order to legalize ethnic discrimination under a non-ethnic vocabulary. The ethnic character of the new name appeared during the Vichy actions addressed specifically against the "nomads" who were of Rromani and Manouche back-ground, not against non-Rromani (i.e. French travelers) mobile families and individuals.

The same *Belle Époque* in Germany became a milestone in the history of Gypsophobia, with the publication in Munich in 1905 of the sinister *Zigeuner-Buch* by Alfred Dillmann. Its appearance was commissioned by the Royal Direction of the Police, and it served above all to institutionalize national hatred against our people. When this book appeared, Adolf Hitler was just six years old but it is clear that all his apparatus of destruction was inspired by Dillmann's racial considerations. It

is useless to describe the further fate of these "ideas", which led to the death of more than half a million Roms, Sintés and Kalés, leaving millions of orphans, widows and physically and psychologically destroyed Rromani generations – not only in Germany, but also in France, Romania, Hungary, the so-called Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, Yugoslavia, Poland, Baltic countries, the Ukraine etc...

The important point is that all these atrocities were carried out under the formal (although hypocritical) justifications of lawfulness and science. In various situations, amendments to the law and/or terminology had to be enacted in order to perpetrate freely crimes while complying with legal requirements. As during the preceding period, the Roms were only objects of various policies of expulsion, massacre and reclusion, as cattle, without any right to dialogue with European authorities. This situation is quite similar to that of classical colonialism.

#### 5. Democratic and humanitarian anti-Gypsyism

When Europe woke up after the nazi nightmare, the Roms fell again in oblivion – and many of them with great satisfaction. The Rromani *Samudaripen* was silenced during decades, what is a normal conduct after any genocide, as History has witnessed with other peoples. Various political reasons brought step by step the *Shoah* of the Jews to public knowledge and some persons (mainly Jews) decided in parallel to unveil the Rroms' extermination, which is so far recognized only half-heartedly, sometimes as a "detail in History" and manipulations are still persisting today, among others about compensations to the victims. Historical bias may even reach courts of justice, as early this year when (thanks to God) a Rrom won a case against falsifiers in Minsk.

However some other manipulations are far more crucial than those where money is involved. If it is true that the nazi disaster has thrown a shadow of darkness upon other forms of anti-Gypsyism, hostility against the Roms has nevertheless remained unchanged after the end of nazi occupation – in France and Poland the Roms were released from the camps one year or so after other detainees. Some survivors even did not dare to count their sufferings for fear of being answered that they deserved extermination. "Hitler has forgotten you" can still be heard as an offence against the Roms. However, in addition

to century old aversion to the Rroms, new forms of destructive attitudes emerged. A key inaccuracy (often cultivated on purpose) is to deny the Rroms' ethno-cultural identity, with all the positive heritage and pride it conveys, and replace by a social (or asocial) identity of poverty, marginalization and even delinquency, which can convey only detrimental views about this nation. We all know to what the nazi "social" conception of the Gypsies led. Yet, even in everyday life, before such extremes are reached, the social approach generates a strategy of charity, addressing a vague group of persons reduced to passivity, whereas their treatment as a nation – who faced such and such damaging events in the past, directs the strategy toward justice and involved the Rroms as active equal partners. This is the proper way which can bring effective results.

Furthermore, after taking unquestioningly for granted the veracity of all negative stereotypes about the Rroms, new waves of "kind-hearted devotees" strive to promote respect, peace and love in the guise of "benign paternalism" toward what they regard as this inherently anti-social (but "so fascinating") people, irrespectively of all their "defects". There are even such cases when ignorance, violence or narrow-mindedness, which exists as well among some Rroms as among any other people, is implicitly treated as a cultural heritage. Instead of recognizing that these defects are pure fabrications, the product of hatred accumulated during centuries, these saints of a new type accept blindly this untruth as a postulate. As a result, such people reinforce the most injurious stereotypes, what is extremely dangerous and typically racist-paternalist – under the veil of anti-racism and tolerance, while comforting anti-Gypsyism under new and probably more solid forms. When generations have turned a people into a mass of heretical, immoral, unhealthy and dangerous outcasts, the solution is to reverse the process and make his true nature come into view, not to admit his false image as postulate to be somehow integrated to a pseudo-humanitarian discourse.

The issue of the tradition is of special significance. Nobody could deny that traditional Rromani wisdom, cosmovision and psychological skills are a priceless part of human thought. However there are within this heritage some elements, whether properly Rromani or borrowed from neighboring nations, which "can be dehumanizing and oppressive. There is a challenge therefore to resolve tensions and conflicts between communal



rights and individual rights, between cultural autonomy and the rights of specific groups (such as women, children, and disabled persons) as defined in international Human Rights instruments" – as emphasized at the Leuven Conference "An Examination of Discrimination and Racism" (Jan. 1998). Ignoring this challenge, refusing critical discussion on this subject and accepting unquestioningly any behavior or statement under the seal of "tradition" (even when the alleged "tradition" has been coined on the spot by some individuals to justify their deeds) as some "devotees" do blindly, shunt the Rroms onto the sidelines, with no perspective of progress, in a situation which is detrimental for themselves and for the genuine tradition as well. This form of non-interference, basically inspired of noble feelings, is destructive when, instead of expressing respect to human beings, it prefers to respect abstract notions.

With a somehow similar inspiration, most non-Rromani observers are prone to blind tolerance and brotherhood among all Rroms, irrespectively of their personal moral value even in cases of conflict: true enough, some fights happen to be totally unimportant, as in all human societies, but others are of crucial significance for the community and the children's future, especially when a corrupt group ruins common projects. In such cases, non-Rroms often respond with anger and paternalism: "Fix first your own problems among you guys and we will speak to you after that" – a perfect way of postponing or even eluding any further cooperation, making the Rroms guilty for this so-called lack of unity. This attitude was a common trick in colonialism to maintain European supremacy. Whereas the existence of non-Rromani crooks is recognized and the same are removed from responsibilities, it is proscribed as a sin to point out the transgressions of a Rromani person when other Rroms are his/her victim. The only exception is when the belongings of the non-Rroms are at stake and then they forget all their lessons of fictive tolerance (we could observe in such occasions real racist attitudes among them, as soon as they felt, or at least imagined they are, abused). However this attitude results very destructive for the development of Rromani communities and many Rroms have lost any confidence in their future, due to the protection some swindlers benefit: this protection is interpreted as the gadjés' interest of avoiding any improvement of their situation – what can mean sometimes the ruin of many

Rromani lives. Accepting corruption among Rroms – just to avoid worrying about truth and justice, while it is severely condemned in banks and other non-Rromani institutions, is basically an act of discrimination and anti-Gypsyism. It is even sometimes deliberately planned in order to warrant the corrupted Rroms' docility to such or such pressure group's design. In various occasions free rein is also left to such quarrels under the pretext that "Rroms have to learn how to cope among themselves with this kind of problems", which means implicitly that Rroms have to learn honesty, as if this virtue was the gadjés' monopoly and should anyway fit with the gadjés' conceptions upon it.

In such cases, dreams of legal framework, fact finding missions and expertise reports to combat corruption are unfortunately mere gadgets. Believing that formal reports, elaborated after some standard inquiries and interviews, can mirror reality in terms of combat against anti-Gypsyism is in reality the best possible protection shell for corruption. As demonstrated repeatedly, human perversity is billions of times more rapid and effective than any control: these are indeed very much needed but only insofar they are effective. The only solution is an objective examination of racist mechanisms, followed by targeted educational strategies made up on the basis of the results. Cross-control by people originating from the community itself, previously trained in a very efficient manner and living again within it, is the only means to overcome this blatant corruption which wastes not only great amounts of money but also confidence in collective work, and most importantly the lives of the victims themselves. In this system, not the real life, identity and heritage, is taken as a basis for further programs but the stereotypes commonly accepted, including anti-Gypsy views, with all the harmful consequences they bring.

There is also a perversion which cannot be identified by missions of observers, namely when a series of facts ( $f_1, f_2, f_3$  etc...), as the links of a chain, lead to racist consequences ( $\Sigma f$ ), while none of the isolated facts is in itself racist. In some cases, this is just a regrettable mechanism, but in many other cases the whole chain is carefully planned in order to obtain discriminatory results while operating only through legally acceptable or unverifiable facts. This is one of the most frequent forms of perversion obstructing the Rroms' access to their rights

and/or to any possibility of complaint in case of deprivation of their rights. Another trick is the elaboration of very strict laws and rules, which are disregarded due to human sympathy and understanding when such an attitude is useful for the authorities, but strictly observed in the opposite case, especially when Rroms may have benefit from such concessions. Such a strategy is irreproachable in both cases: human sympathy and concessions can only be praised, just like the rigorous implementation of the law.

During the last decade, significant promotion has been carried out in relation to Rromani representation and participation in decision making bodies. One should observe that in many societies of the past, Rroms have been properly represented and/or participating at the local level. Segregation of the Rroms, a situation alas too frequent in both past and present times, was not an absolute rule and one should not forget the cases of normal traditional interaction between the majority population and the Rroms. In fact representation and participation as discussed here are considered from the modern, not traditional, point of view. One should first recall that European democracies have not yet found an acceptable scheme to insure righteous representation and the so-called "arithmetic democratorship" is less and less taken for an absolute ideal. People of sound competences and with a capital of palpable results are more and more deemed as entitled to play political roles, even with no vote behind them. This should be the case also for elder heads of Rromani families, unfortunately treated *a priori* as colorful despots, funny accessories or politically inept fossils by the majority. The option for a pure European-type electoral system, excluding the participation of traditional Rromani authorities, is already an act of discrimination of one system against another – as it was so often perpetrated against Native Americans and peoples of the colonies. Even if we accept the hypothesis that the principle of elective delegates could be perfect for the Rroms, one cannot help observing that no so-called representative Rromani body has ever been elected in conformity with principles prevailing among gadjés: all of these leaders have been promoted by a handful of persons so far in Europe, as if it were all about game elections on the school playground. Indeed, how can the principle of legitimate elective representation be hold up in lack of regular candidateship, electoral programs and

campaigns or a minimum *quorum* of voters and the funds for this – not to mention the omission of ballot checking (when existing)? It is clear that such representations have been created to support policies decided by higher instances (for example in governments) and addressing the Roms without any true participation on their behalf. Such policies could be good but it would be an illusion to present them as "originating from the community". However there is a very sharp danger, namely that such installed bodies are entitled to lay waste in one word all the efforts and realizations of other persons, even excellent ones, just because they do not like them or think it is appropriate to do so, without further deliberation. They can also leave a domain totally neglected and as a result no initiative taken in this domain will be accepted by institutions, who have decided to recognize – for most various reasons, the authority of such installed bodies. This kind of fake representative democracy evokes more the power of monarchy or sultanate than real democracy, with dialogue and participation. Even if institutions do not believe in their authority, they can perfectly well pretend they do and take advantage of the situation for their own interest – which could not necessarily be in the advantage of the Roms. So if this system is not anti-Gypsy, it hides and protects plotting of possible anti-Gypsyism in their results.

Direct participation is not respected either even if some Rromani "representatives" (mainly NGO's, and their legitimacy has been discussed above) are occasionally consulted. This was the case with the OSCE Action Plan in 2005 but finally not a single suggestion of improvement set forth by Rromani associations was taken on account for the final drafting. This was no harm since the Action Plan has remained so far a deaf-and-dumb document. A lot has been said indeed about participation and even some donators, when imposing a project onto their beneficiary, a project which would not have been accepted otherwise, introduce now in their contract a clause asserting that the "idea of the project arose from the community". This is a mere incitation to corruption – which is accepted very easily by most NGO members (Roms and non-Roms), who make a living of it for themselves and their families. At a higher European level, some Rromani leaders of good faith are not infrequently put under various forms of pressure aiming at convincing them to "adjust" the final version of a declaration or report they are drafting to the political line of

higher instances, especially in sensitive subjects like Rromani migration. Only a handful resists such pressures. Generally speaking, representation means currently at the European level that all posts are shared between a handful of recurrent persons, who circulate from place to place, from NGO to NGO, department to department as on musical chairs (or "political carousel" as it was said in an explosion of anger at the Action Plan meeting in Warsaw in 2005), negotiating in centralized offices and without contact with reality. Such representation can be compared with Trade Unions in some countries, where they have lost their initial vocation and became instruments of the establishment, disregarding the simple workers' concerns.

In some cases (the Yugoslavian example has been the most dramatic one, but similar situations have arisen in other countries), some NGOs have manipulated the interest of their Rromani basis for the sake of majority population's options, be they political, nationalistic or even economic. It is true that in dictatorships only such shadow-NGOs can survive but this does not make them legitimate partners. A similar situation is encountered in Bulgaria, where some Rromani NGO's justify with a lot of field studies, statistics and declarations, the Rromani children's segregation to schools for disabled. Yet most foreign players still cooperate with these token representatives despite their fake nature, while disregarding all real other forces, which are in fact evicted from dialogue and participation, sometimes with violence, by institutional flunkeys of the establishment(s).

One should underline here a problem specific to Rromani politics: players who are keen to get involved into the general majority political theater have in most cases (not always yet) given up their traditional Rromani political culture (dialogue, compromise, mediation toward consensus, conciliation, non-confrontation, priority to family and group cohesion, various psychological skills etc...) – even if they try to compensate this gap with visible signs of *Rromanipen* (clothing details, public behavior copied on book descriptions, diatribes against the "white" and other clichés) which have the virtue of satisfying the gadjés. Many Rroms at the grass-root level however do not see themselves in such a representation. Are they backward or on the contrary progressive (since Europe has begun to discover

the traditional values of mediation and conciliation, against the prevailing arithmetic of sanctions)? It is hard to answer, but European authorities' endeavor in form[att]ing a new "elite" of Rromani leaders through endless training courses and internships aimed at modeling them after the dominant pattern, as if traditional Rromani wisdom were of no worth in this world, is not only an insult to a culture but also a paradox, since this very customary culture is more and more praised outside the Rromani political realm. One should not forget that Rromani families are full of very pregnant life stories and experiences, which convey a real reflection about human and social relations, no less than the modern legalist pattern prevailing in Europe. This pattern and the strategy of demand promote personal affirmation rather than real results. It is often possible to achieve a lot without "legal framework" (often perceived as violent if the persons are not prepared and therefore provoking reluctance and strategies of inertia or sabotage – always wisely denied or justified), progressing rather through local dialogue and conviction, much more anyway than through global urging declarations and decrees. But all this depends on the ultimate purpose: personal visible promotion or efficiency.

Anti-Gypsyism has recently taken a series of new forms, like ethnically based affirmative actions which provide poor Rromani families, insistently qualified as such, with some specific material aid while their non-Rromani neighbors of similar economic situation are deprived of these advantages. Not only are these alms ineffective because such actions are based in the primitive postulate that money is a panacea (in some cases the alms are even detrimental, for example when they aim at convincing the parents to send their children to schools for disadvantaged children), but in addition, irrespectively of the scarcity of this aid, anti-Gypsy newspapers denounce the "treatment of favor" Gypsies enjoy and raise hatred against the Rroms, even in areas where friendly common life has been a rule for centuries. The Bulgarian media for example report every morning of the financial efforts devoted to the Rroms and this brings water to the mill of racist parties like Ataka. Similar problems have been reported in Albania in the field of health.

Anti-Gypsyism has also gained a foothold in the field of science. It has become a new fashion to question endlessly any moment of Rromani history, especially the exodus from India: the ambiguity of written documents is hold up to obstacle any research in this field. Yet, this situation has never created a problem in other domains of history: for the historian, written documents are not a final and definite warrant for an event of the past, since he knows quite well that false charters have diverted researchers during centuries and that the cohesion in deduction from elements building a hypothesis, including written pieces but not limited to them, is far stronger than an isolated document. I was asked recently to translate a letter from Auschwitz museum, evidencing that there were gaps even in the documentation of the tremendously meticulous nazi administration of death... In fact attacks against the ethnic formation of the Rromani people is not a matter of scientific respectable skepticism but an underhand *veto* to the process of recognizing Rroms as a nation among others, with all the attributes of such a quality. Such recognition would overthrow the widespread perception of the Rroms as a social group, characterized by poverty, backwardness and delinquency and it would place this people on a (theoretical) footing of equality with other European people (despite their lack of compact territory – but this situation will be common to all nations in tomorrow's increasingly mobile Europe). Such recognition would be also a starting-point to educate the majority and therefore combat racial prejudices. It is not a fortuity if the alleged unknown origin of the Rroms and the various, totally ungrounded, theories of affiliation with Indian untouchables and pariahs are forced anew into various publications, appealing even to such dubious arguments as the "genetics of populations", which is not a science but an ideology, the new name for what was called formerly "raciology". In this respect the campaign of disinformation with which we are confronted, is a real manifestation of anti-Gypsyism under the aspect of scientific integrity. The same attitude can be observed with other epochs of Rromani history, among others the five centuries of slavery in Muntenia and Moldova (the very first scientific conference devoted to this major moment of European history was held last year, with great difficulty and no institutional aid, in Paris) and the nazi times, indeed presented

in some publications, but in a manner rather aiming at defending political positions that researching the truth.

The Rromani language is not treated any better than History. While there is a dynamics of evolution in all other great European languages, sometimes painful but, generally speaking, productive, the fate of Rromani seems sealed by the gesticulation of outsiders who block any progress, promoting simultaneously incompatible demands allegedly expressed by "Rroms themselves": the need of a modern and rich Rromani language, the purist determination of deleting loan-words (while loans represent the overwhelming majority of other languages' vocabulary) and the stubborn refusal of all classical means of linguistic enrichment (derivation, borrowing, revival of odd terms and even acceptance of words from other dialectal varieties) to express modern life. All their efforts to make of Rromani a spinning-wheel language, as Joshua Fishman said, are disguised in skepticism of good will and good faith, wrapped in seemingly realistic readiness to follow popular will (in fact the will of carefully selected voices) and presented as respect for plurality of thought. Whereas the Rumanian example evidences that the normal use of a common Rromani language of high culture and sound literature of all kinds, declined in the respect of its dialectal flexibility, is quite possible (16.000 Rromani pupils benefit every year of such classes in Rumania), continuous efforts are made to deny this fact and to obstruct the diffusion of Rromani into hands which could finally build up its European cultural dimension – possibly, as many Rroms, believe due to the fear that a linguistic efficient tool could reinforce the Rroms' self-esteem and integration at the European level. This attempt at sabotage is a crime when so many millions of Rroms speak everyday a gorgeous Rromani language and even when trans-frontier misunderstandings occur, they resolve them through jokes and irony (grave and unsmiling communication is not the paramount ideal of human exchanges). This is comparatively easy for Rroms with a good knowledge of their mother tongue but far more difficult for half-speakers, among whom most skeptics are encountered – in addition to leaders who do not speak at all Rromani at home. Some feel also uncomfortable with good speakers' potential superiority and use skepticism for self-defense.



Teaching Rromani can even become a battle-field of anti-Gypsyism. The ITK institute in Budapest has been delivering diploma of language knowledge in English, Russian, French, German etc. for quite a long time. Such diploma, available on three levels (beginners, intermediate, advanced learners), are needed mainly for university registering, but also in some enterprises. In 2000 Rromani was introduced without any previous reflexion and very soon it appeared that the number of learning hours requested to pass the intermediate level (a minimum of 400 in English but usually rather 600 to 800 in most languages) was only 120 in Rromani. This gave rise to a genuine business with hundreds of costumers – rarely motivated by love toward the charms of our language. The chief of the section decided however to raise the level but she had to face several problems: the costumers did not want to pay for more learning hours, most teachers were not able anyway to teach more than this amount of hours, it was argued that an ever lower amount of hours is required for Esperanto (disregarding the fact that Esperanto has been on purpose designed by Zamenhof, its author, to be learnable in 30 hours) etc... During the last year the number of hours fell to 50 or 60 and the chief of the section suggested a strategy in order to bring Rromani closer to English than to Esperanto. One of the examiners, not a Rrom herself, opened wide range hostilities (indeed real harassment) against the Rrom in charge of the section and her “tyranny” – using widely the argument of feeling discriminated as a Gadji among Rroms, although the chief of the section is widely known for her loyalty in terms of respect to all ethnic identities. The examiner threatens of strike during the next session of exams. Well, it is clear that Universities will refuse the diploma in Rromani if no improvement of the level is achieved and the ITK institute, the local teachers of Rromani and the examiner risk to loose a source of incomes, but on the other side, if the level is raised the teachers and examiners will also lose due to the defection of costumers, who will skip to Esperanto. There is even a more dangerous perspective, since Hungary is very scrupulous at implementing the European Chart of Regional and Minority Languages and very quickly schools will decide to employ holders of Rromani diplomas to teach this language. What will occur when these persons, with a diploma acquired after 50 hours of lessons will have to teach Rromani children their mother tongue ? In formal

administrative terms, every thing will be OK (and no lawly appeal will be lodgebale), but one can imagine the consequences on Rromani itself.

The European Chart of Regional and Minorities Languages itself leaves no real room for a language like Rromani, with no stable administrative and technical tradition. It is probably perfect for the Slovak or Croatian minority in Hungary, with kin-States and accordingly developed modern western urban middle-class vocabulary but imposing over night such requirements to Rromani language and practice, while neglecting all the treasures of literature and orature, is far from being very helpful for the Rroms.

The financial domain also presents surprising features. It is a common place statement that the amount of funds devoted to the affirmation of the Rroms, especially the funds arriving effectively to concrete realizations, is ludicrous: the OSCE ambassadors' conference in Vienna in 2003 concluded that the result of the 100 millions dollars invested in Rromani projects in the period 1990-2000 was zero. As a matter of fact, the total sum divided by 10 millions Rroms and 10 years gives 1 dollar per year and per capita, not a fortune, but anyway, if used as scholarships and similar purposes instead of endless vain conferences, it could have changed radically the European landscape. A more recent report concluded that only 7% of the sums arrive into the hands of the Rroms. Surprisingly, the present so called "Educational Fund" of 43 millions dollars is not applicable for scholarships... while dozens of young Rroms are candidates every year for higher education (among others in Paris). All this evidences a blatant lack of political will to combat the situation inherited from the past, not only in terms of education but also of scientific research: it is convincing in this respect to compare the meager funds devoted to studies about the past and present of 10 millions living European citizens and those used for far astronomical research, abyssal mud and wreck analysis, or other domains of no predicable application. Science has eliminated from its domains of interest any subject related to Rromani culture and people as early as the 19<sup>th</sup> century, making a difference as between children and step-children, and unfortunately the sharing of funds still relies today on this exclusion, a persisting standard of anti-Gypsyism.

There is probably no wide awareness among non-Rromani of this waste of fund but at the local level, it is perceived by non-Rroms by an injustice toward them : “so much money have been devoted to the Gypsies, they say, and there is no improvement of their situation; this shows clearly that they do not want to be included in society and prefer keeping they life of parasites”. Those who response like this do not have the slightest interest in wondering whether or not the funds have been raising in accordance with real needs and wise strategy and whether or not they have been wasted between the source and the “targeted groups” by people, whatever their ethnic background. They just use this argument to inflate anti-Gypsyism around them and attempts by international and/or supranational structures to smoothen well justified criticism while calling for “tolerance” just bring further fuel for anti-Gypsyism.

While in some countries the motto “doing for us without us is doing against us” has met some audience, in other countries – mainly in the Balkans, some non-Rromani organisations feel quite comfortable in explaining that anyway they refuse any cooperation with Rroms due to a “bitter experience”. It is true that in some cases such an experience can be bitter, but by no means more often than with Gadjés. Such NGO’s, to be counted in hundreds, still use the system of “black lists” and therefore eliminate of any opportunity of empowerment all the persons, mainly Rroms, who are suspected of being dangerous for their routine, including when these Rroms have really a positive part to play. In such cases the NGO’s just pretend they do not have time to deal with them, because they have more important tasks to carry out in a short time and there is not ground for any complaint because, as they emphasize shamelessly : “the money is ours and we do what we consider correct with it”. There were in Albania cases when an donator (Spolu from the Netherlands) imposed a totally ill-minded project to a Rromani school, which refused it, but finally was urged to accept it and to inbed in the contact that “the idea arose from the community”...

The illusion that everything thing can be solved by justice and laws is equally extremely dangerous. Nobody with a minimum of good sense can believe in it (people can only *pretend* to believe in it for the sake of individual interest). A couple of days

ago, there was an issue in a Budapest bus, when a Hungarian was standing in front of the door, stopping on purpose the access to a Rrom with a huge luggage (probably merchandises for the market). The Rroms however managed to get in but he expressed his anger to the Hungarian and this was just what he was waiting for to reply and begin a quarrel in which he acted as much as possible to be viewed as the victim. There was absolutely no reaction from other passengers during the 10 minutes of the dispute but it is clear that the children were impressed by this “stinking Gypsy” who had insulted the “regular citizen”. Similar cases are numerous in Hungary : an actor insulted a Rromani colleague recently just for the purpose of being quoted in newspapers. Gadge looking Rromani refugees from Yugoslavia were refused housing through the Ibusz touristic network, just because their Hungarian interpreter, a local Rrom, was identified as such; the first answer was positive but half an hour later, the owner of the appartment called back and express clearly his racist refusal, which was furthered in confidece by the employee but due to the lack of evidences, there was no way for a trial. Again in Budapest, a famous Rromani ethnologue asked for her way to a bookstore where she was supposed to launch a recently published book of hers; she was answered “yes, dear Gypo, we too are going to beg on the street”...

One could even point out cases where formal law is complicit in hiding anti-Gypsyism. In 2004, a documentary was shot in Albania by a Belgian team about corruption and manipulation at the Rroms’ expenses. Rromani organisations tried to circulate the movie in order to arise awareness about this new aspect of discrimination, but this was in vain because one of the interviewed persons was saying in the movie “don’t film us, dozens have done this and we had no advantage in it, except shame”. Leaving aside that this retort was irrelevant since the person had just arrived one day before from Greece, the very fact she was refusing to be filmed was evidencing that the film-makers had not “obtained authorisation in written of all persons appearing in the movie”...

It would be tedious to enumerate all forms of present-day underhanded anti-Gypsyism. One form is encountered in rich countries which set forth a new way of being a Rrom: namely to

be an invisible citizen all week round, working according to majority life standards (priority to personal carrier, individual competition and productivity) and meet for two hours of music and dance on Saturday at the closest House of Culture. I do not know of any Rrom who would be happy with this sanctuarization of Rromanipen, treated as a ribbon on a Tyrol hat. The obsession for denying any substance to Rromani culture can take many other forms. To give but an example, in a recent debate in Greece, while a Scandinavian representative was selling her famous "legal framework", some Greek participants were favorable to promoting Rromani as an aid language in schools, whereas others were complaining about that idea: "Why should they have any additional program, the poor kids, aren't they *our* children like any other ones?" or "What would they do with learning Gypsy language? They want to earn a living, not to lead a nomadic existence!" I had the pleasure to return to them their pseudo-compassion, telling that indeed the Greek minority in Paris has no reason to transmit their mother tongue to their children because they want to earn a living, not run after goats in the scrubland... And it is true that this immigration never heard of Kavafis, Palamas or Ritzos... But this also expresses a very widespread mistake: since children speak their mother tongue as their home language, they do not need to learn it at school, as if the home register encompassed the entire linguistic and cultural heritage. If it were like that, no child would need to attend classes in his home language in his own country. In fact classes are necessary to empower him in all the breadth of a language the use of which is always partial in his mother's kitchen and to introduce him to literature. The negation of this dimension in Rromani is a negation of any cultural Rromani heritage, a form of modern (not so modern!) anti-Gypsyism.

Anti-Gypsyism can be hidden even in straightforward attacks against political cant. In February 2006, Mr Calvi (French public television), a knight of reality talk, presented a long debate under the title of "Delinquency: the road of the Rroms". As it could be expected from the title, the two hours of discussion were desperately racist, without any concrete fact or participation of any real expert, all this under the veil of realistic and "responsible" description of reality. When our group decided to court the producer for outrageous insults against a

population, we met a new obstacle: none of the French non-Rromani NGOs claiming to be anti-racist defenders of Human Rights accepted to support our complaint because, they said, the "racist character of the broadcast was not conspicuous" and it could be risky for them to join us, giving as so-called reason, lest they lose the case and therefore their authority. If a quarter of all that had been said about Arabs or Blacks, hundreds of cars had been set in fire overnight but in this case, the accusations against the Rroms were so close to the stereotypes prevailing in the Human Rights militants' heads that the offence was not "conspicuous". To the best of their surprise, the Council of Europe and the French Broadcasting Monitoring Council (CSA) agreed in full with Rromani NGO's complaint to the State Prosecutor. This shows that anti-Gypsyism is quite well rooted even in the Human Rights establishment. This shows equally that the attitude of these non-Rromani NGO's is a factor favoring communitarian split and therefore racism. On the other hand, most of them push for the theory that Rromani identity brings only stigma to the Rroms and that it should be therefore hushed up and replaced by the identity of "equal citizen". Last but not least, one of these "friendly" NGOs is currently suing for libel a Rromani NGO which had mentioned in a release cases of corruption confirmed by the court, while commenting that those structures are not entitled to speak in the Rroms' name, even when they set up ad hoc fake Rromani associations. All this recalls very much of the old Rromani proverb: "Lord, protect me against my friends, because with my enemies I'll manage by myself"...

These examples have been collected here just to substantiate the difficulty of combating today's forms of anti-Gypsyism, which after WW II developed from a policy of frontal authoritative violence and destruction into a rampant underhand strategy, nevertheless still devastating Rromani lives and perspectives of human development. As a result it is very difficult to describe and overcome it holistically. At least one principle should be admitted to progress in the fight against anti-Gypsyism: namely that any mechanism leading to racist consequences, irrespectively of its initial purpose, is a racist mechanism in itself and should be condemned.

## 6. Rromani anti-Gypsyism

A new phenomenon is now visible in the domain of anti-Gypsyism: the participation of some Rroms themselves. Slobodan Berberski, a famous poet and first president of the International Rromani Union, declared already in 1971 that the new enemy of the Rroms will be now on the Rrom himself. His sad prediction is truer and truer, even if this situation has always existed in history.

First of all some well-off Rroms despise other Rroms living, due to the most various reasons, in worse socio-economic conditions; true enough they may be afraid of being equated with them and lose the esteem they have gained in their country (this applies mostly to Rromani newcomers). However, if a Rrom from Bulgaria and Rumania comes to Sweden or France in search of minimal living conditions, which he cannot find any more in his own country, or not with a sufficient stability, this does not mean that (s)he did so with bad intentions, just out of painful necessity (or because (s)he has been cheated, but this is more and more seldom). Who would rejoice in seeing his son, daughter or daughter-in-law begging in the heat of a boiling city or in rainy winds, put on public view among all kinds of passer-byes while they could live a normal life in their country of origin, **if only** the joined action of inveterate (and only formally combated) anti-Gypsyism, manipulating politicians and corrupt NGO's had not put them on the margin of the socio-economic system?

Instead of declaring that these people "tarnish our image", it would be far more useful to circulate reliable information about the true problems there, involve politicians in a frank and fruitful discussion and grant these migrants the normal living conditions they deserve and strive for. On the contrary it is not rare to hear some utterances as "why should we take action for the Rroms?" In fact, exhibiting reluctance for other Rroms can be an instrument of self-affirmation, especially when one's identity is insecure. It can be also a manner to please some authorities and show that one has evolved into the image expected by the gadje. An ultimate analysis points out at a total lack of awareness among these Rroms, due to the historical exclusion from the right to decision that they suffered, and ultimately the responsibility is not theirs – even if they should progress in their reactions.

Sticking to the patronizing approach of the Rroms as a social group, a group with problems (more precisely "creating

problems"), a marginalized class is an attitude which can be encountered also among some token Rromani NGO's. Yet it is crucial to stop commiseration, even if it represents some leaders' main business, and switch to a more difficult, but indeed fruitful, strategy of justice and recognition.

Another aspect of anti-Gypsyism is the temptation some leaders cultivate to curse as non Rromani any other Rrom who is not docile to their views, political or even denominational convictions, including the paranoia of making the majority population the only responsible for all the Rroms' sufferings in History. This very efficient instrument of manipulation among Rroms violates Rromani identity and accordingly is a kind of anti-Gypsyism.

This should not be confused with the feeling of disappointment coming out often after unsuccessful actions and leading to conclusions like: "anyway we cannot work with Rroms, they lie and steal", "we are a cursed people" or the verse from *Loli phabaj* song "why in the world do we have this stupidity that among us there is no brotherhood"...

As a matter of fact, the greatest element of Rromani anti-Gypsyism is that it is always easy to find a Rrom cheaply paid (sometimes with promises and dreams) and ready to give his/her support to a specific political line; even racist parties have their token Arabs, Jews and Black people. There is no reason Rroms should not be venal the same way.

#### 7. The intellectuals' responsibility

One would need an entire article to analyze the responsibility of artists and writers. Only a short allusion has been done above but it is clear that the quotations forever denigrating and criminalizing the character of the male Rrom in literature while rendering the young Rromni a beguiling temptress (mainly in Germanic cultures) and the old Rromni an evil witch, both women leading all defenseless gadjés to disaster, would fill entire libraries – which is not our purpose here. Such attitudes can be encountered not only in books with recognized reactionary views but even authors, otherwise renowned as progressive, consider that for example the Rroms have no culture – as wrote Hannah Arendt in "Eichmann..." (p. 162) : "would the genocide of the Jews have been a lesser evil if they were a cultureless people, as the Gypsies are?"



The analysis of attitudes toward, and affirmations on, the Rroms suggests that the latter are perceived in majority people's cortex by a different area, probably closer to emotions and irrational, than other nations are – which are perceived in a globally rational manner. This is the reason why quite sensible persons, with wise insight on most topics, are subject to really amazing responses when Rroms are concerned. This was apparently the case in the past also with popular opinion about the Jews but thanks to their clever and relentless work on their image in *goyim*'s eyes, they shifted from the position of fringe elements of the Christian society to a recognized people with all its positive attributes. As a result, when there are cases of hostility toward them, they need now to be based on politically argued grounds (including with mistaken arguments), but not on irrational fear and reluctance to associate with them, as it was in the past (even if there are still vestiges of the past). As a result it can be therefore discussed and overcome if needed – what was impossible as long as the hostility was the result of passions inculcated in childhood. What has been achieved with anti-Semitism (even if there is still a lot to do) could be achieved as well with Gypsophobia and anti-Gypsyism, provided there is an effort to shift the Rroms' image from the position of fringe elements at the outskirts of modern society to a recognized people with all its positive attributes. This has to start very early in education, since quite young children sometimes utter unbelievably racist views about the Rroms, which they would not do, to such an extent at least, with other minorities. Initial work has to start with making shameful a series of folk stories, jokes or nursery rhymes:

«My mother said, I never should  
Play with the Gypsies in the wood;  
If I did, she would say,  
You naughty girl to disobey,  
Your hair shan't curl and your shoes shan't shine,  
You gipsy girl, you shan't be mine».

Belonging to the same series, one can mention the Albanian folk belief that Rroms eat their dead instead of burying them, or of God creating the first Rroms out of feces (instead of the dust of the ground for Adam – in the Carpathians) or even execrable like the nails of the cross or other stereotypes, mainly those based on fear and creating Gypsophobia. The work has to be continued later on through school, literature and especially

media for decades and decades until a better understanding of the Roms, their history and culture, as well as their contribution to society is granted. This shows the responsibility of intellectuals and journalists in this respect. In addition, it is clear that this task is quite achievable, probably within some 20 years – insofar political reality exists in Europe.

#### 8. An attempt at conclusion

In a nutshell, this bird's eye view of anti-Gypsyism in history now leads to the following conclusions:

- a. today's anti-Gypsyism is an accumulation of many various components: some medieval-type fear of the alien, modern enshrinement of Gypsies' dangerousness by the Spanish *Ley de Peligrosidad* or the French *Carnet anthropométrique* – not to mention the more recent *Loi sur la sécurité intérieure*, hardwearing stereotypes of the lazy Gypsy parasite, financial resources for newspapers' sensationalist business, raw material for political discourse, accessory for some dreamers' self-esteem building of a person but also for some self-appointed Romani leaders' career and many others – only a few of which have been mentioned above. This means that the combat against all these layers cannot be reduced to simplistic slogans and a real scientific analysis is required, carefully carried out by a network of small teams in various countries, prior to the elaboration of any strategy, if expected to be efficient.
- b. most elements of anti-Gypsyism find their roots in Gypsophobia, sometimes under the appearance of Gypsophilia – but never of real respect for the Romani people and heritage as such. Restoring real knowledge about the Roms instead of the countless stereotypes, be they negative or so-called positive, so commonly widespread is a necessary but not a sufficient precondition for progress.
- c. Gypsophobia is irrational in essence and it has to be combated very early in the children's development. This is quite achievable, as the drastic changes of attitude in other human domains (smoking, domestic violence, gender chauvinism, protection against STD, road safety etc.) demonstrate.
- d. rational campaigns (among others through the media) have also to be carried out, based on the analysis and deconstruction of the Roms' erroneous images in literature, songs, movies etc.
- e. one should bear in mind that a lack of communication with the Roms linked with preexisting prejudices tend to favor

misinterpretations of ambiguous facts and therefore erroneous accusations (often with all the good faith of ignorance) by non-Roms, leading to further reinforcement of anti-Gypsyism. As a result the more the Roms are isolated from the rest of the population the more racism can grow freely.

f. however, one should not forget that the overwhelming majority of the population is not at all interested in Rromani issues and that they just convey passively a inertial form of anti-Gypsyism, just because they have received the negative signals of some stereotypes in their childhood, which are fueled by sporadic accusations by the media; this contingent of indifferent racists has to be targeted in a special ....

g. today, most of the new forms of anti-Gypsyism do not consist any more in immediate physical violent destruction but in wasting lives of thousands of Rroms, first of all Rromani children, while depriving them of normal conditions of life, blossoming and all the benefits of their cultural heritage – all this in the guise of the most noble ideologies.

h. legal frameworks and reports are efficient only in a limited number of cases, since they can be applied only after the offence has been perpetrated and in many cases the offence, even once perpetrated, can be justified and/or dissimulated quite easily. For example, discrimination in letting apartments or employing people cannot really be subject to efficient controls and there is no method to eliminate it.

i. a lot can be done for free or with minimal expense in the combat against anti-Gypsyism: recognition of the Rroms as a nation, respect for their history, language, culture and heritage, introduction of neutral information about these subjects into school classes of history and most various educational publications, involvement of Rromani elements in TV not only informative but also entertainment broadcastings (quiz, police movies, humor, thematic series etc...).

j. a major role has to be played by the media and this can be achieved only through long-term training of Rromani journalists and their employment in mainstream media, as emphasized by the final report of FERYP's Budapest conference in 2005. In this spirit, Inalco University in Paris is developing a course in Rromani journalism and mediation (master level).

k. more generally as many young Rroms as possible have to benefit from higher education involving Rromani studies in order to be empowered for real key roles in society; if only a

small number of Rroms have access to such education, there will be no healthy competition between them and there is a great danger that their main occupation, as soon as they find a job, will be to fight the few other Rroms "threatening" them (as it is the case currently) instead of investing all their energy into the achievement of their duty – an attitude sometimes referred to as tokenism.

These are only a handful of suggestions, chosen for their simplicity to be presented in a few words, but it is true that there are dozens of others, which can bring effect only if a political will exists at the various levels: national (governmental and parliamentary), European, local and civil (including among Rromani and non-Rromani NGO's). This has also to be integrated into a wider struggle, together with all other minorities and majorities, for real-life linguistic and cultural diversity. One should not feel unsettled by the famous "security pretext", which is widely in use to curtail all kinds of rights and legitimate freedoms (as it was the case in nazi times and is currently reappearing in various European countries) and is immediately followed by the "technical pretext", the "economic[al] pretext" and the "administrative pretext", all in great favor to justify illegitimate (but formally legal) measures and in some cases criminal passivity – with the famous litany "we are mostly sorry, but unfortunately, due to security (or technical, or administrative) reasons...". The grey painting SORRY™ is indeed very efficient to cover wide surfaces of anti-Gypsyism, especially when spread with brushes or rollers UNFORTUNATELY™ (Made in Formalistan).

In today's society one can observe the forms of anti-Gypsyism inherited from the past stacked up and in many cases intertwined into a very complex system. As a result, the Rroms to a great extent, and irrespectively of all kinds of official declarations, remain those enemies who have been created by backward societies and any strategy designed at combating this system has to be itself quite well elaborated and in any case adapted to the complexity of the purpose. It can be achieved in some 20 or 25 years, insofar there is a real political will, but not overnight. Yet, political requirements demand short term results to justify any undertaking and superficial, visible but meaningless results are preferred to in-depth real work. This option is also a mechanism reinforcing anti-Gypsyism.

As a matter of fact, the evolution of anti-Gypsyism from authoritative and self-justified violent actions to multi-faceted rampant and underhanded attacks, under billions of noble justifications, is quite similar to that leading from straightforward colonialism to the subtleties of neo-colonialism. It reminds one also the evolution of censorship, from brutal banning of some opinions to a complex system of underground pressures and enticements. One can also compare this with the exploitation of natural environment, formerly unquestioningly conquering, today hidden behind all kinds of scientific justifications – but hardly less destructive. The fact that problems related to anti-Gypsyism are increasingly similar to general human problems of our societies shows the dark side of Rromani integration.

Be it as it may, troubles bearing harmful consequences in non-Rromani fields bring real disasters in the Rromani domain due to the higher vulnerability of the population at stake.

As long as Rromani children have to beg for their bread on the street just because they are born into Rromani families and the whole system of their country is unable to grant them real and equal access to basic life conditions, while children born into other families are entitled to believe in their dreams for the future, as long as a "visible" leading Rromani intellectual asking for his way on the street is answered by passer-byes "we too are going to beg", as long as mobile Rromani families are deprived of both right to travel and right to settle, as long as local policemen can enjoy harassing Rroms, asking repeatedly for the same documents until a response of irritation gives them a pretext to clamp down on them, as long as Rromani heritage is treated as a funny but worthless curio in the rich European gallery and as long as alleged anti-racist actions leading to obvious racist consequences are not considered as racist in themselves, we can consider our poor Europe has still a lot to accomplish until it emerges from prehistoric times.

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